by **JENN** AND **KEN VISOCKY O'GRADY**

DESIGN CURRENCY

UNDERSTAND, DEFINE, AND PROMOTE *THE* VALUE *OF YOUR* DESIGN WORK

by **JENN** AND **KEN VISOCKY O'GRADY**

DESIGN CURRENCY

UNDERSTAND, DEFINE AND **PROMOTE**
THE **VALUE** *OF YOUR* DESIGN WORK

New Riders | VOICES THAT MATTER™

Design Currency: *Understand, define, and promote the value of your design work*

Jenn and Ken Visocky O'Grady

New Riders
Find us on the Web at: www.newriders.com
To report errors, please send a note to errata@peachpit.com

New Riders is an imprint of Peachpit, a division of Pearson Education.

Acquisitions Editor: Nikki Echler McDonald
Production Editor: Katerina Malone
Development and Copy Editor: Cathy Lane
Proofer: Liz Welch
Indexer: James Minkin
Cover and Interior Design: Jenn and Ken Visocky O'Grady

ISBN 13: 978-0-321-84492-7
ISBN 10: 0-321-84492-0

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed and bound in the United States of America

This book is dedicated to designers everywhere who are pushing the boundaries of the profession to ensure its relevance, prosperity, and longevity.

(And to Lulu. See? Everybody has to do their homework. Even Mom and Dad.)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION TWO: DEFINE VALUE

SECTION THREE: PROMOTE VALUE

→ INTRODUCTION

WHY THIS BOOK?

So you're seeking to prove your value. Somewhere, over the last few months, you've run into professional roadblocks. Someone has questioned your expertise, challenged your process, denied you compensation, closed the door to a promotion, told you that your baby was ugly.

It's a challenging, competitive profession, and a crowd-sourcing culture and economic instability aren't helping.

Our training and expertise are built around visualization.

We are good at what we do. What we're not great at is tooting our own horns. Except to other designers. Internally. Through competitions and conversations in magazines that only other designers read and professional associations that only other designers join. (Why, you're in the design section of the bookstore right now, aren't you?) We are especially unpracticed at sharing language with business.

Business language isn't built around visualization—it's built around numbers.

Sharks and Jets, Vulcans and Romulans, Rocky and Draco—any language and cultural barrier creates conflict. You (and your wallet) want partnerships. This book assumes that you can't be seen as a trusted business partner unless both parties see each other as equals—or can clearly identify what they're going to get out of the interaction. It means you have to articulate the value of design in a way that is compelling to clients. That's why we're writing. (Hopefully that's why you're reading.)

What's Your Design Worth?

There is an old adage in management: If you can't measure it, you can't manage it. From that standpoint, creatives are risky. The value that design generates has been difficult to track, and few firms do it. There are many reasons for this aversion to measurement, but one thing is clear: As budgets tighten and markets become more volatile, clients will want more assurances that they're going to receive significant return on investment (ROI) for design dollars spent. Management wants to know—in terms that they understand and are comfortable with—the value that design creates for their organization. How neatly can you provide the answer?

This is where most of us begin fidgeting: the discussion of measuring value, of proving ROI. As creatives, the very thought simultaneously evokes frustration, boredom, and insecurity. Can we quantify emotive connection? Do we remove the wonder by even trying? If our clients become too focused on tracking the measurable, will there be room for the unexpected to delight and inspire? Aren't many of the qualities of good design intangible anyway? If we solely measure design by business metrics, where does that leave beauty, whimsy, surprise? Will a creative solution, once proven successful, simply spur requests for a long line of knock-offs?

And how are we, art-school trained, supposed to figure out ROI anyway?

You need not worry. Business metrics and beautiful things can co-exist. Beauty matters. Surprise matters. Emotive connections matter. In a society bombarded with media and messages, design identifies and differentiates. We notice and attribute value to the things that capture our attention—even more so that which captures our imagination.

The world needs beautiful design. But aesthetics are inherently subjective. So we're moving the conversation to what we can measure, in the hopes that you, the design expert, will showcase your aesthetic knowledge through the lens of business metrics. You need to be able to talk about value with a shared language that puts your prospective partner at ease. Establishing that trust sets up the "meeting of equals" you've been looking for. It's going to let you do your job with less pushback on your design decisions, get you involved earlier in the creation process, make it easier to justify your fees, and possibly keep your job from being out-sourced or even crowd-sourced.

This book isn't a rumination on aesthetic value versus financial value (we donate to both causes). DesignLand is awash in conversations, essays, and blog posts that debate the merits and pitfalls of viewing creative work through an economic lens. This book assumes you've already visited that conversation and have come out of it ROI-curious, with a desire to learn more about how great design work contributes to the bottom line in a measurable way, and how to express that value in terms that current and prospective clients will understand.

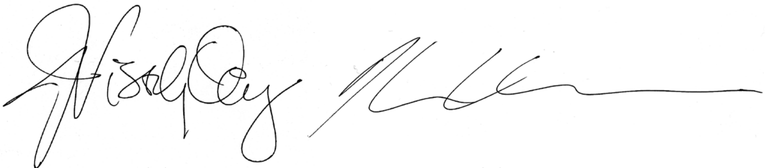
Use It!

We know you're busy. So we've designed the reading experience with that in mind, curating a survey of big ideas about value into three categories that will help you (1) *UNDERSTAND* the value you create as a design professional, (2) *DEFINE* your audience to create deeper value for your clients, and (3) *PROMOTE* the value of design.

This book is focused on helping you find practical ways to apply these concepts to your work, improving what you get out of your practice, and what you create for your clients.

So that's what's ahead for the next 200-some pages. All the goodies in our arsenal—and a whole bunch more, borrowed from our Growing List of Professional Crushes (and assorted academic, commercial, and pop-culture sources)—lined up to help you position yourself, your business, and your profession, to be valued.

You need this information for your Good Generalist shelf. Know when to use it and when to call in the experts. So armed, go make good stuff.



Jenn Visocky O'Grady **Ken Visocky O'Grady**

→ CHAPTER 4

DEFINING METRICS

Metrics, metrics, metrics! Setting business metrics, measuring return on investment, quantifying value—when did design go all Wall Street?

If your professional training was steeped in creative development, and the metric system was the closest you ever got to "metrics" (but heck, you're much more comfortable with points, picas, and pixels), then the thought of measuring your creative impact probably ranks somewhere between word problems and tax preparation on your fun list.

All snark aside, the focus on numbers has been a significant obstacle for designers to overcome. Whether it stems from an inability to place measurable parameters on creative work, or from fine art roots that culturally emphasize aesthetics, we don't like proving our worth with spreadsheets. But our relatively young profession has matured to a level where, if we are to make the argument that "design can change businesses and culture," then we have a responsibility to demonstrate how. And numbers, well, they're the universal language.

In recent years, there has been a stronger push for organizations to allocate resources to endeavors that are results-based. When budgets are tight, everyone wants assurances that the work they commission will yield measurable returns, and rightfully so. Understanding the numeric impact of your work makes you a better advocate for design, a better business partner, and ultimately, better at selling your services.

Determining which metrics best suit the assignment is also part of your job. (Better your determination than someone else's.) Measurement doesn't always require financial framing. Understanding a range of assessment concepts will provide you with the right evaluation tools for each project. There is an art to establishing functional metrics.

The good news is, like most everything else, it's about 5 percent talent, 5 percent experience, and 90 percent practice.

SETTING METRICS:
RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The most common and broadly used tool to establish financial success in business is return on investment (ROI). ROI is a basic measure for determining profits earned by a specific business investment.

It can be used to formulate the rate of return on projects, processes, and business decisions. Showcasing high rates of return for the work commissioned, or being able to discuss positive returns for previous projects, enables design activities to be favorably showcased to clients in terms that they understand and value.

ROI is most commonly discussed as a percentage or a ratio, calculated by dividing returns (money made by the project) by the initial cost of funding an endeavor or investment. The most basic formula for ROI is expressed as:

(Gain of Investment - Cost of Investment) / Cost of Investment x 100 = % ROI

For a simple example, if the design and production of marketing materials cost $10,000 (design fees, copywriting, printing, paper, shipping all included) and helped foster $60,000 in new sales, then ROI for the project would be 500%. The calculation looks like this:

$60,000 (Gain of Investment) - $10,000 (Cost of Investment) = $50,000

$50,000 / $10,000 = 5

5 x 100 = 500% ROI

Using this equation, any percentage greater than zero indicates that the investment yield is more than the initial cost. Higher percentages indicate more profitable investments and better business decision making. Simple, right?

Return on investment is often used as a summative evaluation, meaning in order to thoroughly understand the relationship between the initial investment and the return, you have to see the payoff. It evaluates a project after it is completed.

One obstacle when applying simple ROI calculations to design projects is that often the work commissioned is not easily broken out from other factors that influence consumer decision making. In the example above, what role did the design of the material play in purchasing decisions? How can the design of the material be separated from the efforts of the sales staff using

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{\text{GAIN OF INVESTMENT} - \text{COST OF INVESTMENT}}{\text{COST OF INVESTMENT}} \times 100$$


Fontsmith
10 years in type
The story of the
Fontsmith library
10

it? Were other market forces at work, like the bankruptcy of a competitor, which may have influenced the subsequent increase in sales?

Some types of design practice are easier to evaluate with ROI than others. For example, packaging design is highly influential because of its direct consumer connection. How often have you knowingly overpaid for soap, lotion, candles, or chocolate bars because the package was so unique, lovely, homespun, or luxurious that you just "had to have it"? Often, these purchases are of products that the consumer has had no previous encounter with via advertisement or sales staff interaction. Positive brand associations, in these cases, are highly linked to the design of the packaging—and we can therefore measure the ROI of that design with less complication from additional factors. In contrast, design for business-to-business collateral, especially that which supports the interpersonal efforts of sales staff, is more difficult to measure in terms of ROI. You can calculate numbers, but they're more subjective because of the additional forces at play.

↖→→

This 10-year retrospective box set, designed for Fontsmith by Thompson Brand Partners (shown at left and on the next page), delivered big results in several key areas: Fontsmith's sales increased by 53 percent, and corporate licensing went up 255 percent. The end result is a 415 percent return on investment in the first year after project launch (ROI OMG).

If design is only one part of the total picture (and that's almost always true), find additional ways to evaluate success.

In the marketing materials example used at left, evaluation beyond ROI might involve partnering with the client to determine what role the materials played in closing sales and fostering new business. This can be achieved through ethnographic review, including surveys and interviews with sales staff and the clients served. Conversations with the individuals involved can lead to invaluable insight on how design influences consumer decisions. Factoring other metrics into your summative analysis will paint a broader picture of the value generated.


FS Me
The story
of listening
and learning
by Jason Smith.
Fontsmith
Channel 4
The story of a
game-changer
by Jason Smith.
Fontsmith


10 years in type
The story of the
Fontsmith library

SETTING METRICS: COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Cost/Benefit Analysis (CBA) is another measurement tool, used to determine the financial ramifications of undertaking new projects, implementing new processes, and making purchases and/or staffing decisions.

Whereas ROI is summative, CBA is a formative tool, used to determine the feasibility of a project before it begins. CBA helps determine objectives and set metrics for how to measure success.

Creative teams may be especially interested in the concept of Cost/Benefit Analysis, as this form of measurement attempts to quantify elements of "soft value" by assigning financial representation to intangibles (can we measure emotion?). It also seeks to assign dollar values to things that don't usually have them (can we estimate the financial value of a single website visit?). The use of a common unit of measure, like money, helps the entire project team, regardless of discipline, share information. When it's well informed,

CBA is a useful exercise to aid decision making and to predict the profitability of an undertaking. The CBA formula is simple:

> Positive Factors – Negative Factors = Project Viability

or it can be expressed as:

> Benefits – Costs = Profitability

Comprehensive and accurate information gathering is crucial to the success of this exercise. The steps are seemingly simple, but require detective work to source accurate and vetted numbers.

Step One

Generate a list of all hard and soft costs associated with the project.

> For example, if you are hired to produce a mobile application to improve a patient experience, hard costs might include flat fees associated with conducting user research, design and development, and distribution. Soft costs might involve estimating expenditures to health-care staff on effective use of the app in patient interactions, or measuring the time needed for the user to adopt new tools. As you might imagine, establishing numbers for hard costs is a much easier exercise than for soft. Determining appropriate estimates for soft costs requires creative investigation. In the case of training staff you could gather data about how many billable hours were spent in past training exercises.

↑

Before developing the prototype for Medley, a patient information system for mobile devices, the design team at Artefact had to consider all of the costs and potential benefits.

For example: The team knew that almost 75% of health-care professionals owned iPhones and iPads, presenting an opportunity for a mobile solution.

However, most hospitals have already purchased expensive electronic medical records systems—the cost of which is prohibitive to the adoption of new tools. Therefore, Medley would need to integrate seamlessly with existing systems.

In the case of the user adoption rates, you might reference academic studies on technology adaptation rates to inform your projection.

Step Two

Identify all project benefits and associated remuneration.

In our new mobile application example, hard benefits may take the shape of increased patient satisfaction (work with the medical team to gather these estimates; if the proposed project is a major paradigm shift, you may have to engage external sources). Soft benefits might include increased perceptions of satisfaction, credibility, or competence (ask your client to share the current process for determining levels of patient satisfaction). Collaborative detective work is essential when forecasting benefits.

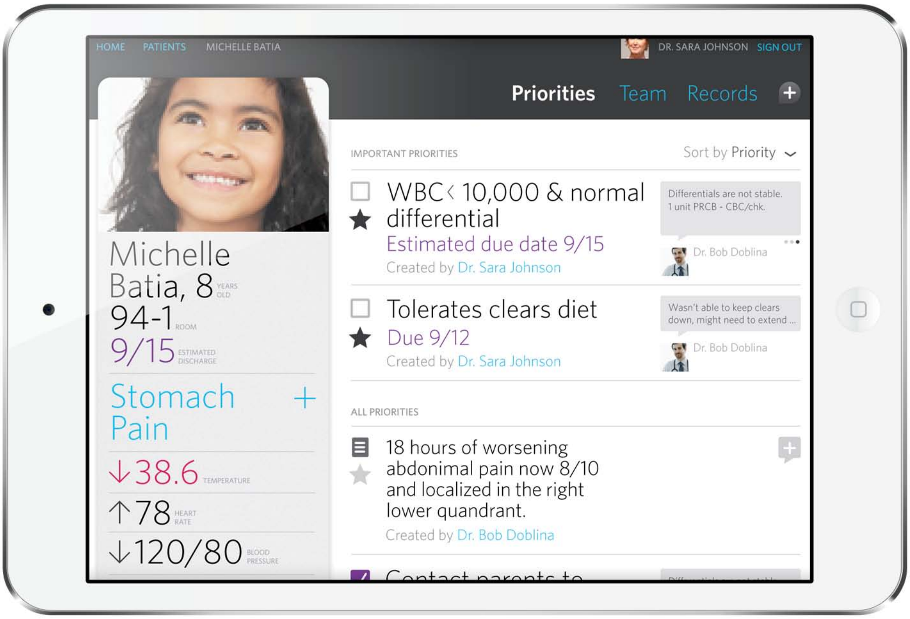
Step Three

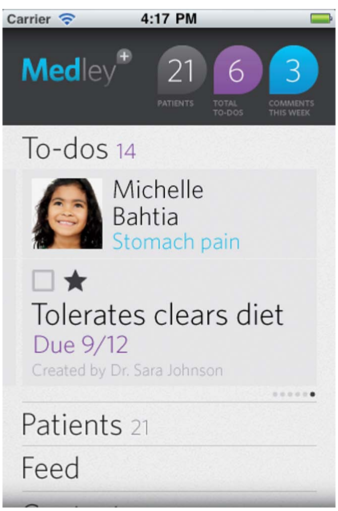
Subtract costs from benefits and analyze the results.

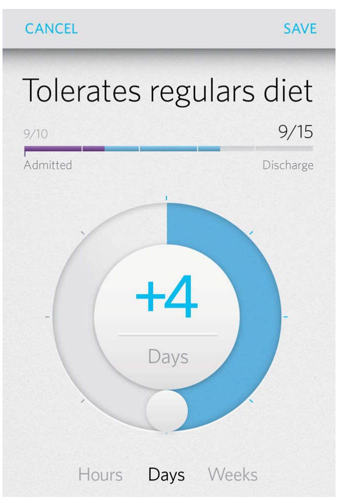
Once you have an informed estimation of hard and soft costs and benefits, you can formulate a project's profitability—or "viability" if you don't want to be as locked to the numbers. If the benefits outweigh the costs, then theoretically, your proposal merits serious consideration.

There are numerous considerations when determining the relationship between costs and benefits. Include some of the following questions as you weigh the results of the information you've gathered: What would happen if your client did nothing? Does the cost of the client's investment in the project outweigh inactivity (are there short-term and long-term answers to this question)? What would be lost if the project failed to meet objectives? How long will it take to earn back the investment in the project—or, how many sales will have to be closed to make back the initial design investment? Determining how fast investments are returned can persuade decision makers to greenlight your project.

To track financial data, clients and designers must be willing to work together, sharing and evaluating numbers at the start and completion of a project. All too often, creative teams walk away after artwork has been delivered and aren't involved with the work's applied use. In this scenario, designers never get to see the results of their efforts, leaving the framing of the outcome entirely to the client's perspective. This also creates a calendar-based service relationship. ("Hi Bob, it's that time of year again to start thinking about producing the annual.")







Medley works on multiple mobile platforms.

Product benefits include: visualizations of patient data for caregivers (easier to process than lengthy written descriptions); tools that help prioritize patient care; and the promotion of more efficient collaboration amongst health-care team members.

If you're going to use metrics to establish impact, your client must view you as a partner. And remaining involved and responsive after the artifact has dropped positions you as an invested strategist. ("Sally, what if we use the message from the annual to drive all of this year's investor-relations materials? Let's see if we can put together a survey to determine how that message is resonating with key stakeholders.")

Remember, not everyone is comfortable talking about money (this is a universal truth, from awkward family dinners, to dating mishaps and marital spats, to one of the top indicators that a prospective client is a future nightmare). Do you have a client who will share his or her sales projections? Or does the client treat any internal financial information as state secrets? If the corporate culture doesn't allow for collaboration, none of these tools are available (and it's probably an indicator that reciprocal partnerships aren't either).

Build a relationship with your clients so that they understand how the work you're creating is being used and what effects it has on their business, and then connect it to monetary impact. Help them recognize that they're as responsible for actively engaging the collateral they've commissioned as you are for positioning it to serve them well. (If a marketing kit falls in sales's desk drawer, does anyone hear it?)

These concepts, from initial measurement to applied use to tracking, don't work if you spring them at the conclusion of a project.

Make thoughtfully setting metrics a part of your services agreement at the outset of a project—and a part of the culture of your work. Tracking those outcomes, and the associated revenue earned, connects design to the bottom line.

MONEY ISN'T EVERYTHING: METRICS BEYOND THE BENJAMINS

While looking at revenue is one way of making a case for the success or failure of a project, money isn't the only—or even best—way of framing performance.

Often, financial metrics are strictly focused on hard value, with roots in manufacturing-based economies: "We make widgets. They cost 10 cents to manufacture and sell for 20 cents. One-hundred percent return on investment. Now sell a million!"

As economies become more complex, traditional tools like ROI and CBA are less effective singular measures because they provide only one perspective on performance. Today's practitioner needs to look beyond financial measures to make the case for design.

A popular and current business approach that should resonate with creatives struggling to pin a price on soft value, sets success metrics by defining each project in terms of Goals, Outputs, and Outcomes. Here's how it works:

Goals

Goals define why a project was commissioned and the purpose(s) driving all associated actions. For example, a design team is hired to create a mobile application that fosters health-care communication. A primary goal may be to increase online dialogue between patient and clinician, and decrease unnecessary emergency room visits. Secondary goals might include empowering patients by demystifying disease, explaining treatment procedures, and encouraging independence. Project goals should be defined between client and designer at the onset of their working agreement. An easy question to begin the conversation is "What does success look like?"

Outputs

Sometimes referred to as "deliverables," outputs are tangible and help achieve project goals. In business terms, outputs are the end results of a specified process. Often, in traditional design practice, outputs are the artifacts created. In the health-care scenario above, the mobile application is one output of the design process.

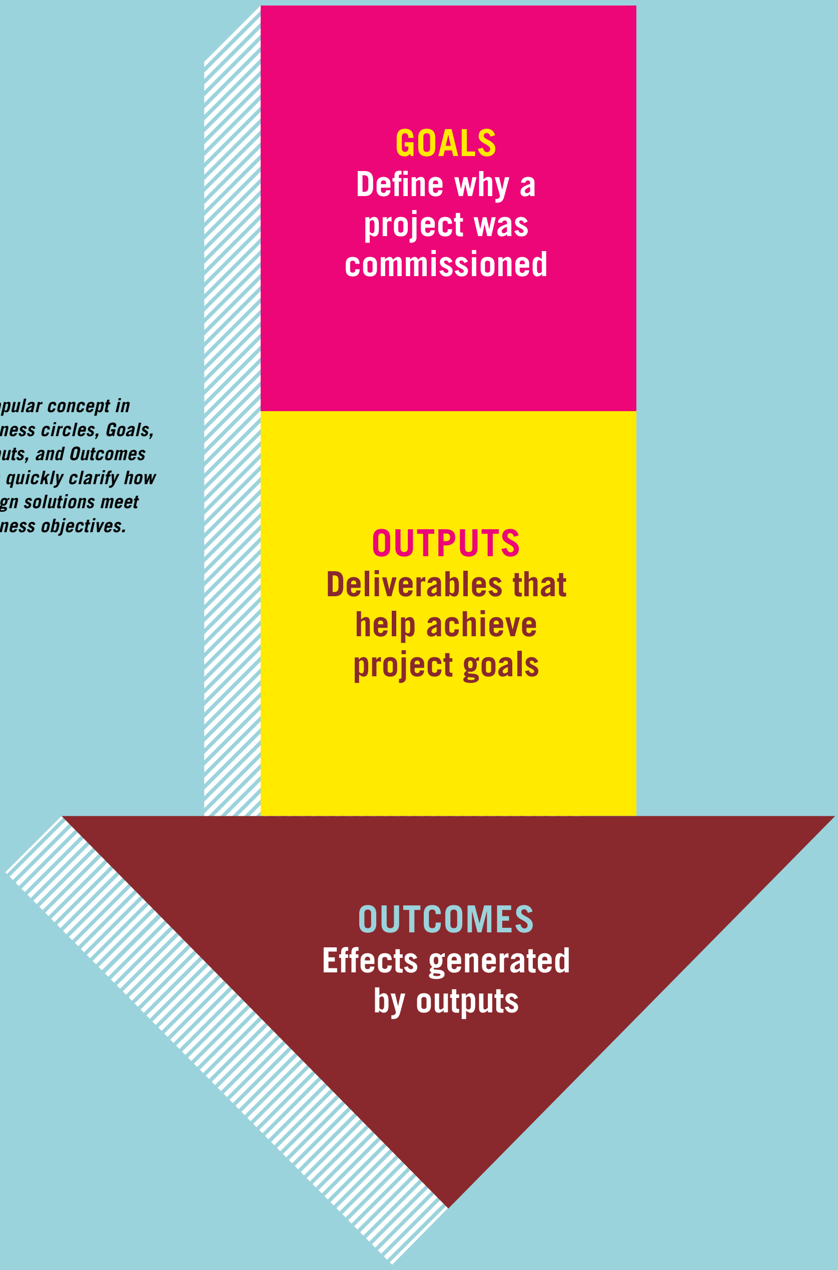
Outcomes

Outcomes are the effects generated by outputs and should align with project goals and be measured upon project completion. In our example, project performance can be evaluated in numerous ways.

For example, tracking how many people download the application can provide

GOALS, OUTPUTS, AND OUTCOMES

A popular concept in business circles, Goals, Outputs, and Outcomes help quickly clarify how design solutions meet business objectives.



insight into user adoption rates in the target audience. To understand how the new tool helps patients manage their health, the team could measure the frequency of return emergency room visits for users with chronic conditions. Surveys and interviews can be conducted to determine the effect on patient outlook and understanding of illness. The results of all these investigations can be categorized as outcomes.

Determining what, when, and how to measure is one of the most complicated components of setting metrics, especially for those new to the process. The acronym SMART, which commonly stands for Simple, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, and Timely, is employed in user experience and information technology circles to help set—you've got it—smart metrics. SMART is a quick way to define the characteristics of functional metrics. Use this tool to determine if you're setting the right benchmarks.

Simple

A great metric is easy to understand, so be clear about what you're going to measure and how you're going to do it. Align what you're measuring to project goals. For example, if the goal was to help increase awareness of an event, find a way to measure attendance that considers the impact of your creative work. Simple tools such as a survey that asks, "How did you hear about this event?" can help you frame design's impact. If users can select "advertisements" or "posters" along with "email" and "word of mouth" you'll be able to quantify the success of the promotional pieces.

Measurable

Choose something that can be compared with a standard. For example, revenue earned can be measured. So can time saved. Focus on things that you can count. If you're trying to quantify subjective things like opinions and preferences, use tools that allow you to do so objectively, like surveys and questionnaires, rather than interviews, which are more difficult to add up. Also, be sure that decision makers all agree on how each metric will be measured. Disagreements here can lead to poor understanding of the results.

Actionable

The metric must reflect an opportunity to effect change. Assessments must be relevant to specific project goals and must also relate to the skills and charges of the project team. For example, a communication design team hired to promote a new toy may have little or no impact on the manufacturing and distribution processes that bring that toy to market. Therefore, including time-to-market statistics in the assessment of a product's ad campaign makes no sense. A metric that your work has no ability to influence doesn't serve you, the project, or your client.

SMART
METRICS

SIMPLE

The metric is easy to understand.

MEASURABLE

The metric is easily measured.

ACTIONABLE

The metric reflects an opportunity to effect change.

RELEVANT

The metric is relevant to project goals.

TIME-BASED

The metric makes efficient use of time.

Use the simple acronym SMART to help you and your client set metrics at the beginning of a project. To manage expectations, be sure both parties are in agreement on the established metrics before diving in.

Relevant

The metric must be related to project goals or desired outcomes. Go back to the brief and review goals and objectives. Use them as a benchmark for determining what to measure.

Time-based

You must be able to acquire, compile, and compare data as efficiently as possible so you can learn from the results and act on that knowledge. Some ways of analyzing and measuring performance take longer than others. Some deliver rapid results, while others are worth waiting for because they frame in a cumulative fashion. Be sure to have an eye on timeliness—without falling for hastiness. Don't stop the iterative process waiting for long-term results.

While the concept of tracking the impact and success of traditional graphic design practice may be novel, our sister professions of interaction and user experience design have been doing this for a long time. The underlying principles of setting a good metric, as outlined by SMART, can be broadly applied to any design endeavor.

Work closely with your clients to determine a shared vision for each project.

What is it that your client specifically wish to achieve? What will be produced? And what are the desired outcomes? Can they be measured? Connect your design activities with the client's goals, and work with them to develop systems to track success, tailoring metrics to their specific needs. To make this easier, at the beginning of a project, ask your client how he or she has historically determined business success. Are there ways to align your services with things the client is already measuring? Tools, like customer satisfaction surveys, may be in place and easily adapted to your project's needs.

MAKING THE CASE: NUMBERS IN CONTEXT

You have the tools to measure design's performance. With them, you've generated loads of data. How do you frame those results, building your case for design's significant impact on business?

We know that the current economic climate sometimes overemphasizes financial metrics. And we know that only focusing on the numbers does not provide a comprehensive view of an organization or individual project—that value is generated in multiple interconnected ways. To paint a broader picture of the creative currency you exchange, you need a framework to put those numbers in context. The following examples are interrelated and a well-vetted starting point for your own investigations.

Balanced Scorecard + The Four Powers of Design

Balanced Scorecard[1] (BSC) is a widely adopted management and strategic planning tool created by Drs. David Norton and Robert Kaplan (of the Harvard Business School). Used as a framework for evaluating performance, BSC combines financial metrics, like those discussed previously in this chapter, with other types of measures to provide a comprehensive understanding of a company or organization's overall effectiveness.

Whether applied to individual projects or to a company or organization as a whole, BSC analyzes performance through four essential lenses, encouraging custom metrics for goals in each category. The framework is based on examining the subject through these perspectives:

Learning and Growth Perspective:
Focused on continuing education, self-improvement, mentorship, and embracing culture that promotes knowledge acquisition and application.

Business Process Perspective:
Focused on the internal processes and systems relevant to the running of an organization and how they relate to its unique mission.

1. Internationally recognized for excellence, the Balanced Scorecard Institute provides instruction, professional certification and consulting services to governmental, nonprofit and commercial entities worldwide. Articles, examples, training, and even BSC software are all available through the Institute. Learn more at balancedscorecard.org

Customer Perspective:
Focused on end-user satisfaction.

Financial Perspective:
Focused on fiscal stewardship and evaluation across multiple monetary indicators.

One of the reasons BSC has been so successful is because it's an extremely flexible framework. As such, it has been broadly adopted by numerous industries and disciplines. Of specific interest to designers is the work of Dr. Brigitte Borja de Mozota.

Dr. Borja de Mozota's specialty is managing creative teams and helping them communicate their value to decision makers. To establish a common vernacular between business and creative, she adapted the BSC framework so familiar to managers, developing The Four Powers of Design value model.[2]

Her concept helps design teams position the positive attributes of their work into four corners of value. By "balancing" these sections when evaluating a project (including data stories from any metrics and measures), we can promote design as a "Transformer," "Integrator," "Differentiator," or perhaps most approachably for many of our clients, as "Good Business." Here's an overview:

Design is a Transformer
(aligns with Balanced Scorecard's Learning and Growth Perspective):

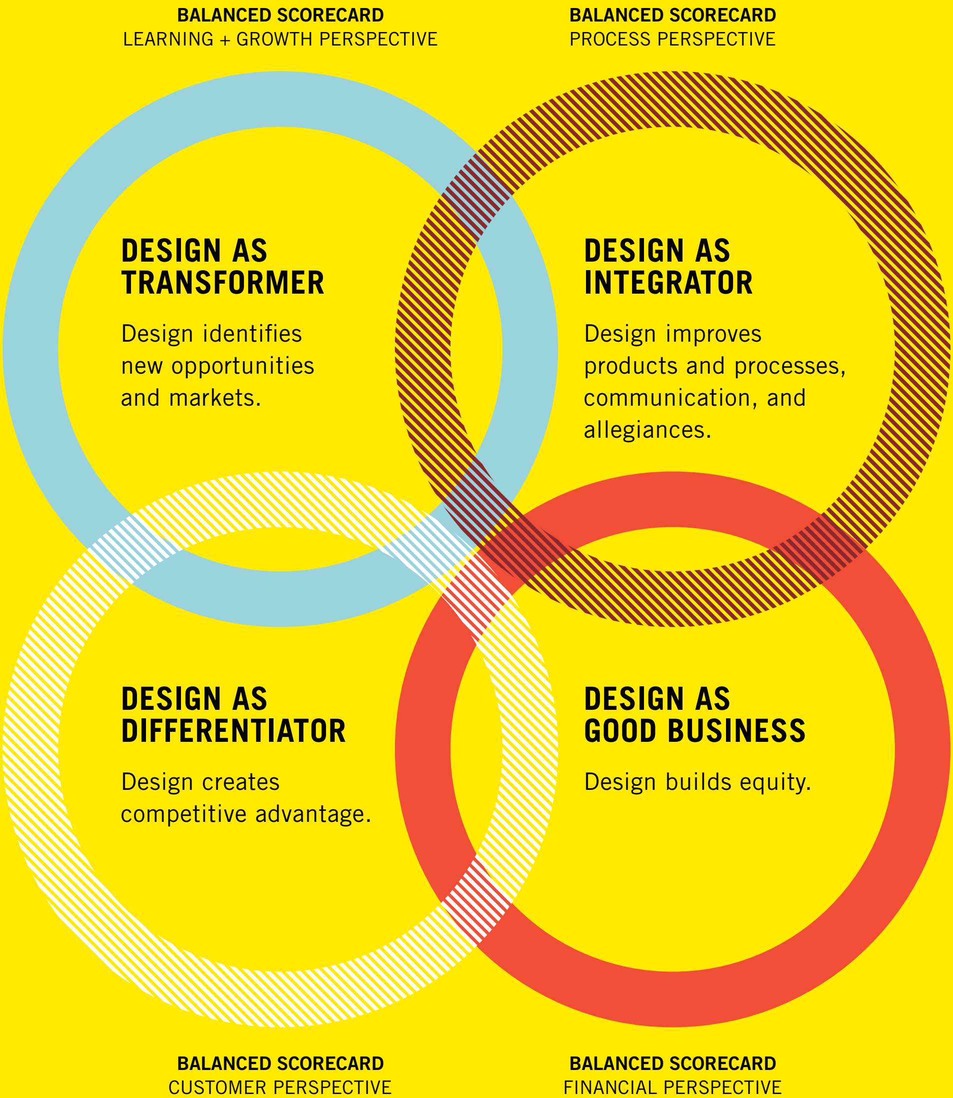
Design identifies new opportunities and markets, and copes with—or predicts—change. Use this corner of the model to identify how design creates new futures. Examples might include design thinking that extends brand directions, graphic vernaculars that attract new audiences, or even an entrepreneurial venture spurred by design.

Design is an Integrator
(aligns with Balanced Scorecard's Process Perspective):

Design improves products and processes, communication and allegiances. Use this corner of the model to showcase how design builds connections, either interpersonal or intellectual. Examples might include rapid prototyping and iteration that increases time-to-market, visualizations that help relay complex concepts, or ideas that inspire new partnerships and collaborations.

2. Brigitte Borja de Mozota is a champion of design, and director of research at the Paris College of Art. Review "The Four Powers of Design: A Value Model in Design Management" here: http://bit.ly/txlvSd

FOUR POWERS
OF DESIGN



↗

Brigitte Borja de Mozota's Four Powers of Design value model aligns design activities with the popular Balanced Score Card method used to evaluate business success. Her model provides designers with a framework for assessing their own work, and creates a common ground between creative teams and business managers. The Four Powers of Design model is shown here in relationship to the Balanced Scorecard categories.

Design is a Differentiator

(aligns with Balanced Scorecard's Customer Perspective):

> Design creates competitive advantage. Use this corner of the model to highlight how design helps you stand out in a crowd. Examples might include design that fosters credibility and customer loyalty, brands that inspire advocates, or unique experiences that generate higher levels of end-user satisfaction.

Design is Good Business

(aligns with Balanced Scorecard's Financial Perspective):

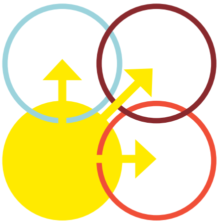
> Design builds equity. Use this corner of the model to demonstrate how design affects the bottom line. Examples might include increased sales or profit margins directly linked to creative, expanded web traffic credited to a redesign, or cost savings in production of designed artifacts.

These models present a common language for design professionals and the people with whom they work to use when discussing project development. BSC has long been validated in professional circles and aligns well with design, as evidenced by the Four Powers model. Together, they present an accessible tool for creatives to frame the diverse value generated by their services. Integrating these ideas into the design process connects your specialized knowledge with broader corporate goals and visions—solidifying the argument that design is strategically relevant, and in fact, essential to success. Promote the multilayered way in which design can serve an organization.

In an interconnected system, when value in one area of the scorecard is generated, it has the potential to affect other areas, too. Measure the impact of your work across categories. This multilateral approach moves the conversation away from strict emphasis on simple financial metrics (which, for creative work, are often difficult to delineate). Document design's impact across projects, campaigns, even organizations. Discuss your metrics, the data they've generated, and the stories these frameworks help you tell.

VALUE
CREATION

FOUR POWERS OF DESIGN/ BALANCED SCORECARD



According to the Four Powers of Design and Balanced Score Card, when value is created in one area it also generates value in others.

TIME IS MONEY:
EMBRACING METRICS WITHOUT DRAINING CREATIVE

So does running the numbers make your design work better? No. Your mad creative skills make your design work better.

Running the numbers helps you relay the value of your work to clients or to employers.

Let's be honest: Traditional forms of business analysis like ROI and CBA are often awkward fits for creative projects. Regardless, designers need to understand the basics because they're a strong component of business vernacular. Looking more closely at the measurable returns from your work, comparing its success to goals collectively outlined, frames those victories in the language of business rather than in terminology insular to design. If you don't have time or resources for a formal cost/benefit analysis, you can still use concepts from that exercise when discussing the transformative power of your creative work!

When you initiate conversations with your clients or employer that help them qualify and quantify aesthetic decisions, you're expressing professional accountability and aligning your success with theirs.

You've also just positioned yourself as an expert, and now your client is a lot less likely to Frankenstein-design your concepts or demand that you stop using purple because his ex-wife really liked the color.

Will developing success metrics or learning how to measure outcome take some time? Yes. Are you already burning the candle at both ends? Probably. Here's why it's worth making that additional investment of your time and energy:

- You can more effectively recruit new clients and new projects by showcasing the positive business outcomes of your previous work. (And you already have all of those bright, shiny case studies in your portfolio—adding this information just makes them shinier.)
- You will strengthen relationships with existing clients because you're illustrating how your work has proven to be critical to their success. (This is your foot in the door to suggest the new revenue streams you've been previously too shy to propose.)
- Documenting the impact of design helps educate your clients, partners, or employers on its value. (This should help diffuse the inevitable á la carte conversations that clients initiate when they want to pick-and-choose services in an effort to reduce fees.)
- You can charge more for your services because they're based on measurable outcomes, instead of seemingly subjective aesthetic decisions (cha-ching).

As the project manager, design the metrics before you design the artifacts.

Take charge of how you showcase value. The numbers should never be the only bar by which creative work is evaluated (hooray, design competition eye candy!), but emphasis must be placed on our ability to generate and demonstrate impact. Think of it as standing behind the good work that you do.

QUICK TIPS

JUMP IN

Never set metrics before? Time to start. Do your initial research, and then begin to lay the foundation for an internal process that's practical. Start tracking and measuring your work, acclimating your office to the practice before you start sharing results with others.

START EARLY

Set metrics as a part of your services agreement at the outset of a project. Collaborate with clients to determine project goals, and then agree upon ways to measure your success accordingly. Establishing metrics that both management and the creative team agree upon, before work begins, ensures that nobody feels like the rules of the game are being changed while at play.

THINK BROADLY

Be sure to select metrics that cover all aspects of a project. Don't just focus on the financial aspects of value creation. Think about outcomes.

ADVANCE TOOL USE

Ever try to save time by hanging a picture with only your eagle eyes and a Swiss Army knife? Remember the feeling of relief when you give in and hunt down your measuring tape, level, and cordless drill? Balanced Scorecard and The Four Powers of Design are power tools. Use them to improve your craft.

INDEX